

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation of Need for Foster Homes

Licensing is a legal process and care must be taken to ensure that applicant/licensee rights are protected. The DHS as a child placing agency is also responsible for protecting the rights and ensuring the welfare of the children placed in foster care. Whenever there is potential conflict between the rights of an applicant or a licensed foster home and the rights or safety of children to be placed, those factors relative to children are to be considered first. All foster home licensing requires extensive, professional judgment by certifying staff. In those instances where judgment becomes difficult and potential for error is greater than normal, decisions are to be weighted toward protection of children.

Agencies receiving Federal funds may not use standards related to income, age, education, family structure, and size or ownership of housing where those standards are arbitrary or exclude groups of prospective parents on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

A foster home applicant or licensed foster parent who has reason to believe that s/he has been denied or delayed the placement of a child because of race, color or national origin, can aggrieve the decision through existing administrative and/or legal remedies. Refer to SRM 142, MEPA Complaint Procedures for more information.

Relative Licensing

Certification Referral

Once the screening and basic assessment process has been completed and placement is made with the relative, a referral must be made within ten calendar days to a certification worker. The referral for licensing may be made to a placement agency foster care (PAFC) provider or DHS depending on the individual process of each county.

Certification Process

The certification worker:

- Upon receipt of the referral, must contact the relative placement within one calendar day to schedule a home visit.

- Must complete two home visits with the relative within 30 days of placement.
- Will coordinate with the FC worker to complete the home study within 30 calendar days of placement. Efforts could include:
 - Contacting the relative caregiver weekly to assess the progress towards licensure, identify barriers and provide assistance with the licensing process.
 - Providing direct assistance to the relative caregiver in overcoming any barriers noted (e.g. driving the relative caregiver to get fingerprints as opposed to giving bus tokens, assisting in scheduling medical appointments, calling references and document that the reference was taken via phone, etc.).
- Will make active efforts to assist the relative in the licensing process.
- Will ensure the relative is licensed within 90 calendar days of placement of the children into the relative's home, unless a 60 day extension was requested and approved.
- Must notify the assigned FC worker immediately if the relative is unable to become licensed.

Licensing Extension

A request to extend the licensing process beyond the 90 day time frame requires a written request for extension. The extension must not exceed 60 days. The request must be submitted to the DHS supervisor for review. The supervisor then submits the request to the County Director or District Manager for approval or denial.

The licensing extension request is submitted as a memo and must include the following information:

- Child's name and case number.
- Relative caregiver name and relationship to child.
- Requesting certification worker's name.
- Date of placement.
- Date licensing referral received.
- Date licensing process began.
- Reason why the extension is necessary.

- Anticipated certification completion date.
- Name of DHS supervisor.

The extension request is returned from the County Director or District Manager to the DHS supervisor. A copy of the extension request is placed in the child's case file with the original returned to the certification worker.

Family to Family

The Department of Human Services is committed to improving results for children and families involved in the child welfare foster care system, by employing four key Family to Family strategies: active community partnership; neighborhood-based recruitment, retention, training and support of foster parents; self-evaluation and data-driven decisions; and Team Decision Meetings (Family Case Reviews) with both birth and foster families.

The expected outcomes of Family to Family include:

- A reduction in the number of children serviced in institutional and congregate care.
- A shift of resources from congregate and institutional care to family foster care and family-centered services.
- A decrease in the lengths of stay in out-of-home placement.
- An increase in the number of planned reunifications.
- A decrease in the number of re-entries into care.
- A reduction in the number of placement moves experienced by children in care.
- An increase in the number of siblings placed together.
- A reduction in the total number of children served away from their own families.

In order to achieve these goals, DHS is committed to:

- Developing a network of family foster care that is neighborhood-based, culturally sensitive, and located primarily in communities in which children currently live.

- Ensuring that siblings are routinely placed together with families.
- Increasing the number and quality of foster homes to meet projected needs.
- Providing services to birth families and children in a timely fashion to promote reunification as soon as possible.
- Involving birth parents, foster parents, relatives and family support persons as team members.
- Becoming a neighborhood resource for children and families by investing in the communities where large numbers of families involved in the child welfare system live.

Foster family home certification begins with the location of a potential foster family and continues through the placement and supervision of children in the home. The process is divided into four major categories:

- Recruitment of foster homes,
- Family study (including licensing),
- Placement, and
- Continuing supervision.

Program Statement

Licensing Rule 400.12302 requires that prior to the beginning of each fiscal year the local office is to prepare a written program statement that includes the following information:

1. Types of foster care provided.
2. Age, race, ethnic background, and specific characteristics of children to be served.
3. Type and numbers of foster homes needed.
4. Types of services provided to foster families, supported by geomapping as available.
5. Geographic area covered.
6. Other categories as appropriate.

This program statement is to be made available to persons making formal inquiry regarding foster home licensure.

This statement, in combination with other documentation, may be used to support a recommendation for denial of application based on “lack of willingness to provide care for the types of children served by the agency,” (Rule 12306(1)(a)) e.g. the prospective foster parent is only willing to care for infants available for adoption.

FOSTER HOME DEVELOPMENT

Recruitment and Retention Program

Each local office shall develop and maintain an ongoing recruitment program to ensure an adequate number of suitable foster homes based upon the annual program statement outlined above and unique needs of individual children as they are identified. The department must also develop, implement and maintain a program of foster home retention that includes foster parent involvement and that identifies the causes of the loss of foster homes and prescribes actions to be taken to retain foster homes. (R400.12304)

An ongoing foster home recruitment and retention program is required to ensure an adequate number of suitable and qualified homes to meet the needs of the children served. Foster parent input should be utilized to determine the reasons that homes have closed.

The Department of Human Services is committed to ensuring that an adequate number of qualified homes is available to meet the individual needs of the various children entering the foster care system. By strengthening recruitment and retention efforts, considerable benefits will be accomplished for the foster care delivery system. Local DHS offices may designate staff for recruitment and retention activities.

Goal

Local office objectives are to:

- Increase the number of inquiries about foster home licensure.
- Increase the number of licensed relative caregivers.

- Increase the percentage of applicants who complete the licensing process.
- Maintain a sufficient number of foster homes to meet the needs of children served by the department.

DEFINITIONS

Community Awareness

Printed information, participation in community service programming, group presentations, etc. with content addressing the specific foster care and other special needs of children in need of placement in a geographic area (county or boundaries of a coalition).

Recruitment

Information and activities designed to draw the attention of prospective foster parents in designated geographic areas (e.g., counties) including print and broadcast media, personal appearances by staff, recruitment and mentoring by licensed foster parents.

Retention

Activities and information designed to reinforce and maintain interest in fostering for licensed foster parents including training and recreation activities, awards and incentives, and recognition banquets.

RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Recruitment efforts should be designed to provide information about the characteristics and needs of children served by the department, the nature of the foster care and adoption processes, and the supports available to foster and adoptive parents throughout the community.

Comprehensive Recruitment Plan

The department must have a comprehensive recruitment plan that includes:

- A description of the characteristics of children served.
- Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community.
- Diverse methods of disseminating both general and child-specific information.
- Strategies for ensuring that all prospective parents, including relatives, have access to the home study process, including location and hours of service that facilitate access by all members of the community.
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities.
- Strategies for addressing language barriers.

Collaborative Efforts

Collaborative efforts are encouraged, including joint efforts with:

- Family to Family community specialists.
- Strong Families/Safe Children.
- Volunteer Services.
- Multi-Purpose Collaborative Bodies (MPCBs).
- Public/private partnerships.

In the formation of collaborations between local offices and private child placing agencies, care must be taken to not duplicate payments already being made to private agencies. For example, an amount for foster parent training and recruitment is already included in the daily rate paid to private agencies.

Note: No reimbursement may be made by local offices to private agencies for training provided to DHS foster parents.

Contracted Resources

Contracted resources may be purchased to work collaboratively on recruiting new foster families and retaining existing foster families. Specific resource efforts may include:

- Community awareness (education) activities;

- Assisting in the development of annual recruitment and retention plans;
- Marketing and advertising strategies;
- Foster parent recognition and retention activities;
- Foster parent training promotion;
- Promoting foster parent recruitment events.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND RECRUITMENT

Recruitment Activities

Possible recruitment activities include:

- Developing an annual county-wide recruitment and retention plan for the fiscal year (10-1 thru 9-30).
- Implementing a county-wide community awareness and recruitment campaign.
- Developing and maintaining ongoing contacts with all levels of the community for purposes of education about foster care in general, and the need for particular homes.
- Developing and distributing necessary resource material for community awareness purposes that describe the county's (geographical region's) specific recruitment needs, licensing procedures, and requirements.
- Responding to individual inquiries within a time frame that will ensure that families are receiving prompt and courteous attention in person, by phone, or by mail.
- Working collaboratively with the foster care and certification staff in scheduling foster home orientation, preplacement and ongoing training.
- Working jointly and cooperatively with contractual and appropriate community resources to implement coordinated activities outlined in the county's recruitment community awareness and retention plans.

- Developing a monitoring document to track the number of phone inquiries and their disposition.
- Tracking responses to community awareness and recruitment efforts and activities.
- Tracking the frequency, participation, and content of foster parent orientation, preplacement and ongoing training on a quarterly (90-day) basis.
- Participating in collaborative activity beyond county boundaries where appropriate.
- Participating in relevant DHS-sponsored meetings.

**Foster Parent
Recruitment
Activities/
Expenditures**

Allowable foster parent recruitment activities/expenditures include:

- Orientation training and materials cost.
- Preplacement training and associated costs.
- Mentoring of prospective foster parents.
- Brochures and advertising about the need for foster parents and associated costs.
- Presentations to community groups for recruitment.
- Family recreational events.

**RETENTION
ACTIVITIES**

A program of foster home retention must be developed and implemented that includes the involvement of foster parents and addresses the reasons for foster parent turnover.

Allowable foster parent retention activities/expenditures include:

- Ongoing training in advanced topics for licensed foster parents and associated training costs.
- Regional training costs.

- Annual recognition events, and associated costs.
- DHS support groups and associated costs.
- Educational library in DHS offices-foster care related periodicals, videos, books, etc.
- Family recreational events.
- Mentoring of licensed foster parents.
- Annual regional training conferences for adoptive/foster parents and relative caregivers.
- Travel costs for DHS staff and foster parents to attend Foster Pride/Adopt Pride "Train the Trainer" sessions.
- Reimbursement to foster/adoptive parents for costs of attending authorized training (mileage, etc. at state rates).
- Reimbursement to foster/adoptive parents for costs of co-training Foster Pride/Adopt Pride training. Speaker fees for recognition events, conferences and/or training.

FOSTER PARENT ORIENTATION, PREPLACEMENT AND ONGOING TRAINING

Training is defined as the presentation of information to prospective and/or licensed foster parents designed to meet various licensing rule requirements and reinforce competencies of foster parents. Distribution of information is required during the process that begins with the prospective foster parent's inquiry. The stated number of hour requirements are minimum requirements, according to the referenced licensing rules.

Twenty-four (24) hours of training must be provided to a foster parent by the end of the first year of licensure. The required training program is the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE curriculum. The training is organized around five competencies:

- Protecting and nurturing children;
- Working as a member of a professional team;

- Supporting relationships between children and their families;
- Meeting children's developmental needs and addressing developmental delays; and
- Connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime.

Michigan's PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) curriculum meets all policy and licensing requirements.

The training program must be conducted by a trainer approved by the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI). Discussed in detail below are orientation, preplacement training and ongoing training.

DHS will provide orientation, preplacement and ongoing training for **each** prospective/licensed foster parent as referenced in the department's foster parent training plan. Training may be delivered at the local office level or coordinated by combinations of counties/agencies with similar needs, called foster parent training coalitions. Foster parent training may be delivered by DHS staff and/or appropriate combinations of staff and available resources.

ORIENTATION

Before completing and submitting an application for an original license, each prospective applicant, (including relative caregivers who are applying for licensure) must attend an orientation session. If there are two caregivers in the home, both must attend an orientation session. The purpose of orientation is to provide individuals with enough information to make an informed decision regarding whether to proceed with applying for a foster home license.

While there are no specific requirements in the child placing agency rules or the foster home rules regarding the number of hours of orientation, as part of the PRIDE model, the orientation is to be up 3 hours. The topics that must be covered are:

- Purpose of foster care.
- Characteristics and needs of the children placed by the department.
- Attachment and separation issues.

- Impact of fostering on the family.
- Role of the foster family.
- Licensing process.
- Grievance procedures.
- Importance of a child's family.
- Parent and sibling visits.
- Department foster care policies and procedures.
- Department foster care parent training requirements.
- Supportive services and resources.
- Provisions of the children's ombudsman act.
- Provisions of the child protection law.
- Foster Care Review Board's role

The purpose of orientation is to provide information to prospective applicants, not to obtain information from them. At the end of orientation, if the individual(s) indicates a willingness to care for the types of children served by the department and wants an application for licensure, the Foster Home Licensing Application must be provided.

Local Office Plan

The plan for orientation should be a part of an overall training plan to meet the needs of prospective applicants and licensees. The plan is to contain topic areas, a schedule of orientations sessions, and cost estimates.

Funding Source

The allocation for orientation is treated separately from other foster parent training, as there are different eligibility criteria for prospective foster parents rather than licensed foster parents. The source of the funds is the Foster Home Development Fund.

PREPLACEMENT TRAINING

After the foster home licensing application has been signed and returned, the local office or private agency is to begin the initial licensing process. Using the modules defined in the PRIDE model, 12 hours of training must be completed by each applicant prior to any children being placed into the home and by the end of the first 6 month provisional license. The three (3) hours of orientation may be counted toward the requirement for 12 hours of training.

Note: When relatives who already have children placed with them apply for licensure, 12 hours of training are required prior to making any payments using Title IV-E funding.

The purpose of preplacement training is to provide foster parents with the initial skills they will need to work with children placed into their home. Some of the topics that were covered in a superficial way during orientation will be covered in greater detail as the focus of the training changes from assisting individuals with making a decision about applying for a license to increasing the base of knowledge needed to work with foster children.

ONGOING TRAINING

Ongoing training is any training that is offered after the initial orientation and preplacement training. An additional 12 hours of the PRIDE curriculum must be delivered to foster parents within the first year after the initial licensing period. Generally, foster parents will have had at least one placement during the initial six (6) month licensing period. Licensed foster parents who have had a child placed in their home will be able to understand training information on a different level because of the experience of actually providing foster care.

After the initial 24 hours of training from the PRIDE curriculum, each foster parent is required to obtain six (6) hours of training per calendar year. The purpose of ongoing training is to ensure that foster parents have the necessary skills and information to meet the needs of children placed in their homes. The requirements are the same for all licensed providers, including licensed relatives.

Training Topics

Child placing agency licensing rule 400.12312 specifies topics that must be included in training received by foster parents within the time period of orientation through the first two and one-half (2 1/2)

years of licensure. The initial foster home study and all subsequent annual and renewal studies must contain a section that assesses the training needs of individual foster parents. The required topics may be prioritized based on the identified needs of the foster parent.

Training topics that must be covered within the first two and one-half (2 1/2) years are:

- Characteristics and needs of children.
- Effective parenting.
- Behavior management.
- Importance of the foster child's family.
- Role of the agency.
- Emergency procedures, first aid, and fire safety.
- Preparation of the foster child for independence.

Additional Topics

Additional topics that should be addressed are:

- The rights and responsibilities of foster parents and the agency.
- Supportive services available to children and foster families.
- Working with the foster child's family.
- The agency's role in supporting and monitoring the functioning of foster parents.
- Assisting children in transition to adoptive or other permanent placements.
- Requirements of the Multiethnic Placement Act and Interethnic Adoption Provisions (MEPA/IEP) and cultural sensitivity.
- Other relevant topics determined by the agency.

ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING NEEDS

There must be an assessment of the training needs of individual foster parents at the time of the original home study and at each annual assessment of the family. (Rule 400.12316(40 and R400.12313(2)(c)). The assessment must be documented in the foster home certification file.

Factors

The factors to be considered are:

- The strengths and weaknesses of the entire family.
- The number, characteristics, and types of children to be placed in the family.
- Prior experience of the foster family in caring for children similar to those that might be placed into the foster home.
- Skills and knowledge that will improve the ability of the family to meet the needs of children already placed into the home.
- Other specific topics may be required based on the assessment of the individual licensee.

**TRAINING PLAN
DEVELOPMENT**

A training plan is to be developed annually with the input of foster parents. The plan must meet the following requirements:

- The training needs of individuals foster parents.
- The requirements of R400.12307 and R400.12312, including both topics and specific numbers of training hours to be delivered.
- Compliance with the agency policy of delivering the PRIDE training model within identified timeframes for applicants and licensees.

The annual training plan is to cover the period of October 1 through September 30, coinciding with the fiscal year. Plans are to be submitted to the DHS Foster Care Program Office, 235 S. Grand Ave., Suite 510, Lansing, MI 48909 no later than August 15 for the following October 1 fiscal year.

FUNDING & EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

Specific Covered Costs

Training reimbursement is for expenses that have been approved by the Foster Care Policy Division and regional offices for activities the DHS and foster parent training coalitions provide to assist foster parents with meeting the basic Child Placing Agency Licensing requirements and the specific needs of children placed in licensed homes.

Foster Parents And Trainers

Licensed foster parents and approved trainers affiliated with DHS, with training coalitions, or with agencies under contract with DHS, are eligible for reimbursement of the expenses described:

- Meals at rates within State Standardized Travel regulations:
 - Breakfast:** for travel beginning prior to 6:00 am and extending beyond 8:30 am.
 - Lunch:** for travel beginning prior to 11:30 am and extending beyond 2:00 pm.
 - Dinner:** for travel beginning prior to 6:30 pm and extending beyond 8:00 pm.

Participants in approved activities may be reimbursed at current state rates for qualifying meals. Meals included as part of the training package are subject to state travel regulations.

Child care is reimbursed at a maximum rate of \$1.50 per hour per foster child per training hour. Group care provided on the training premises is reimbursable at the same rate.

Mileage is reimbursable at the published Volunteer Services rate.

Training Reimbursement

- The reimbursement rate is currently \$30.00 per hour of actual training time. The fee includes travel costs. Requests for rate exceptions must be included in the training plan submitted to the regional office and must be approved in advance of the actual training session.

Exceptions will be considered when training is provided by a recognized expert in the topic area and when the agency or coalition sponsoring the training has coordinated the session with other agencies and the community and/or other communities to maximize the number of participating foster parents.

- Reimbursement for trainers employed by public child-placing agencies, such as DHS staff, may be paid through compensatory time or overtime, which is paid when the training provided requires the employee to work more than 40 hours in one week.
- Training sites are preferred on a no-cost basis. Training site costs must be documented in the training plan and must be approved in advance of provision of training. The cost, name and location of the site must be identified along with a description of efforts made to obtain a no-cost site.
- Training materials must be ordered from the appropriate source for the type of training needed. A description and projected costs for these materials must be included in the training plan.

Reimbursement Guidelines

Travel costs for DHS staff and foster parents who provide training or attend “Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Train the Trainer” sessions must be reimbursed according to state travel policy rates. **Note:** DHS and child placing agency staff may not be reimbursed for their time as trainers.

Reimbursement to foster/adoptive parents for costs of providing or attending authorized training may include:

- Child care: \$1.50/hr per foster child for each hour of actual training time.

- Mileage: State standard rate from home address to training site per training day that the trainee/trainer attend.
- Meals: State rules for reimbursement, except that dinners will be reimbursed only if an overnight stay is required.
- Lodging: One day of lodging at state rates if the trainee/trainer's home address to the training site and back is 100 or more miles.

Appropriate expenditures may be made locally, to registered vendors, using the MAIN payment system, with Cost Center 72225, the appropriate object code and the local office code as the index code.

Activity Expense Reimbursement

The county Department of Human Services, or the fiduciary agency for coalitions or multi-agency training sessions, is to submit a DHS-1582 (Payment Voucher), including the DHS county office department number, or the fiduciary agency's Federal ID number, no more than 60 days after the first date of training. Supporting documentation that details the following must be attached:

- Actual dates of the training session(s);
- Topics of each training session with a statement certifying that the topics covered meet Licensing Rules 400.12307 and 400.12312 for the licensed foster parents trained;
- Length of each session;
- The name and employee status of each trainer and the amount of reimbursement due each trainer;
- Number of licensed foster parents in attendance and a signed attendance sheet for each session;
- Total costs associated with training sites, if any, and a copy of the billing;
- Total costs of training materials, number and type of training materials purchased and cost each, or a copy of the billing;
- Total travel costs being charged, including total miles and cost per mile;

- Total costs for child care per child, in individual and on-site group care circumstances;
- Total meal and refreshment charges, including total number of meals and breaks and cost for each.

Unallowable Expenses

Foster home training funding may not be used to enhance or supplant foster care funding to support youth placements or adoptive/foster parent, relative or guardian expenses of care. Additional **unallowable** purchases include:

- The development of logos or Web sites for coalitions or groups;
- DHS or child placing agency administrative costs related to retention or recruitment activities;
- Attorney fees;
- Promotional items, such as coffee mugs, backpacks, lanyards, etc.;
- Acquisition of vehicles, equipment, furniture;
- Home improvements or any reimbursement to foster parents, child placing agencies or youth for the costs related to youth care;
- Payments to child placing agencies for retention and recruitment activities that may reasonably be considered to be included in their administrative rate to fulfill their contractual obligations including general public awareness activities, attendance at community events, preparation of church bulletin, development or recruitment materials, provision of training, newspaper advertising, public service announcements, provision of foster care orientation;
- Purchases prohibited by the Governor or DHS administration.

Allocations

Allocation of funds is made to Regional Service Delivery Centers for distribution to local offices as appropriate. Regional offices may approve plans, allocate funds to their counties and may shift funds within their counties.